



MAIDSTONE LED BY MERRICK

Dickie Guy (goalkeeper). Aged 29. Transferred from Wimbledon last month for £1,500. Starred in the Dons' FA Cup run in 1974-75 when they reached the fourth round before losing to Leeds United in a replay.

Chris Kinner (right-back). Aged 24. Was voted Player of the Year last season. Formerly with Wealdstone and Gravesend as a midfield player, but is now a permanent fixture in the back four.

Neil Merrick (central defender). Aged 26. Club captain and a most consistent defender who previously played for Worcester City, Bournemouth and Germiston Callies (South Africa). Son of former Birmingham and England goalkeeper Gil Merrick.

Kenny Hill (central defender). Aged 25. Has had Football League experience with Gillingham and Lincoln City, and played for Washington Diplomats in the North American League.

John Hutton (central defender). Aged 20. Joined the club from Folkestone last summer, having previously been with Gillingham.

Billy Edwards (left-back). Aged 26. Signed last season from Wimbledon, where he played in the side that won the Southern League championship three times running before being elected to the Fourth Division.

Kenny Wallace (midfield). Aged 26. Signed from Dover three seasons ago. Previously with West Ham, Hereford and Exeter as a winger.

Glen Atken (midfield). Aged 26. Another former Wimbledon player who joined Maidstone a year ago and has brought added authority and vision to the midfield. Also had Football League experience with Gillingham.

Norman Fusco (midfield). Aged 26. Signed from Gravesend last summer. Has also had Southern League experience with Margate. A player who loves to attack.

Alan Budden (midfield). Aged 24. Joined the club from Kent League side Feversham, and after showing impressive form for the reserves won a first team

place last season. Full of running and enthusiasm.

Glenn Coupland (striker). Aged 26. Consistent scorer now in his third season with the club, who turned down a £3,000 offer for him from Margate a fortnight ago. Previously with Dover and Ramsgate.

Peter Silvester (striker). Aged 30. Signed this season from Cambridge

United. A prolific scorer with Norwich, Reading and Southend, has spent the last four summers in North American football.

Brian Gregory (striker). Aged 23. Signed from Weymouth last season. Established his reputation as a goalscorer with Gillingham and Margate (record 44 goals in a season) before joining Luton Town.



DICKIE GUY
... £1,500 signing



GLENN COUPLAND
... consistent striker

From rags to riches

FEW clubs can have made such tremendous strides in the last few years as Maidstone United. Seven years ago they were struggling at the foot of the Isthmian League. Gates were down to a hundred or two, and interest in the town club was at rock bottom.

Today they are firmly established as one of the top non-League clubs in the country and are poised to enter the new Premier Alliance which is due to start next season.

This is an ambitious competition consisting of the top clubs from the Southern and Northern Premier Leagues, which it is hoped will finally provide a link with the Football League through promotion and relegation.

One of the leading lights in the plan is Maidstone chairman Jim Thompson, who is also chairman of the Southern League. A dynamic businessman, he has been largely responsible for the club's rapid rise in the 1970's.

In that time they have spent well over £100,000 in ground improvements, and they now boast facilities second to none. New floodlights were installed last season at a cost of over £20,000, and a complete new drainage system was put in during the summer.

Founded in 1897, the club spent many years in the Kent, Corinthian, Athenian and Isthmian Leagues.

The decision to turn professional was taken in 1971, and in their first season in the Southern League they missed promotion from the First Division South by a point.

The following season they were champions, and last season was their best in the Premier Division when they finished third behind Bath City and Weymouth.

In 1974-75 Stones had their best ever run in the FA Cup, reaching the second round proper before going out 3-1 at Swindon before a crowd of just over 10,000.

BATTLED

This season they have battled right through the qualifying rounds, having beaten Horsham YMCA 2-0 at home, Dover 1-0 at home in a replay after a 0-0 draw away, Ramsgate 3-1 away and Waterlooville 2-1 away.

Maidstone's manager is the former Notts County and Hartlepool goalkeeper Barry Watling, at 31 one of the youngest managers in the league. He only gave up playing regularly this season.

Among the well-known players who have progressed from Maidstone to clubs in the Football League are the former England amateur international David Sadler, who signed professional for Manchester United in 1963, and John Ryan, who joined Fulham in 1964 and is now with Norwich.